

American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation

Helping you breathe a little easier

SMOKING AND BUSINESS

October 31, 2002

- ❖ In 2002, the International Labor Organization (ILO) reported that cancer was the largest killer in the workplace, accounting for approximately 640,000 workplace-related deaths per year globally. ILO stated that secondhand smoke in the workplace is estimated to cause 2.8 percent of all workplace cancer. (Reuters, "ILO says workplace hazards kill 2 million each year," *Reuters*, May 24, 2002.)
- ❖ Workers exposed to secondhand smoke on the job are 34% more likely to get lung cancer. (Fontham, et al. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention*, 1991; 135: 35-43.)
- ❖ Many people have higher levels of exposure to secondhand smoke than they believe, much of it stemming from the workplace. 88% of nonsmokers have significant levels of nicotine residue in their blood. (Pirkle, et al., "Exposure of the US Population to Environmental Tobacco Smoke: The Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1988-1991," *JAMA* 275:1233-1240, 1996.)
- ❖ Compliance with workplace smoking policies is high. A Bureau of National Affairs—Society for Human Resource Management poll found that seven out of 10 companies with smoking policies indicated that employees "rarely" (50%) or "never" (20%) violate the rules. (The Bureau of National Affairs, "Smoking in the Workplace: 1991," *Bulletin to Management*, SHRM-BNA Survey No. 55, August 29, 1991.)
- ❖ A random survey of local labor union leaders found that 48% supported worksite smoking bans or restrictions, and only 8% were opposed to both. (Sorensen, G.; Stoddard, A.M.; Youngstrom, R.; Emmons, K.; Barbeau, E.; Khorasanizadeh, F.; Levenstein, C., "Local labor unions' positions on worksite tobacco control," *American Journal of Public Health* 90(4): 618-620, April 2000.)
- ❖ There is a growing trend to eliminate smoking in the workplace. Nationwide, in 1999, nearly 70% of all indoor workers reported a smokefree environment, compared to 46% in 1993. (Shopland, D.R.; Gerlach, K.K.; Burns, D.M.; Hartman, A.M.; Gibson, J.T., "State-specific trends in smoke-free workplace policy coverage: the Current Population Survey Tobacco Use Supplement, 1993 to 1999," *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 43(8): 1-7, August 2001.)
- ❖ In 2000, the proportion of adults who work primarily indoors and reported an official workplace policy that no smoking was allowed in indoor public or common areas and work areas ranged from 61.4% in Mississippi to 83.9% in Montana. The proportion who thought that smoking should not be allowed at all in indoor work areas ranged from 66.4% in Wisconsin to 83.8% in DC. (CDC, "State-specific prevalence of current cigarette smoking among adults, and policies and attitudes about secondhand smoke: United States, 2000," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 50(49): 1101-1106, December 14, 2001.)
- ❖ Workplace smoking increases an employer's potential legal liability. Nonsmoking employees have received settlements in cases based on their exposure to secondhand smoke. For example, a waiter in Sausalito received an \$85,000 settlement in a workers' compensation case. Other nonsmokers have won unemployment compensation and disability benefits (Sweda, E.L. *Summary of Legal Cases Regarding Smoking in the Workplace and Other Places*. Boston: Tobacco Control Resource Center, December 1997.)
- ❖ Secondhand smoke harms the health and reduces the productivity of nonsmokers, costing employers money. Estimated costs associated with secondhand smoke's effects on nonsmokers range from \$56 to \$490 per smoker per year. (Kristein, "How Much Can Business Expect to Profit From Smoking Cessation?" *Preventive Medicine*, 1983;12:358-381; Jackson & Holle, "Smoking: Perspectives 1985" *Primary Care*, 1985; 12:197-216.)

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- ❖ Smoking in the workplace damages property and increases cleaning costs. A survey of 2,000 workplaces found that 23.3% of those with smoking restrictions reported a reduction in maintenance costs. (Swart, "An Overlooked Cost of Employee Smoking" *Personnel*, August 1990.)
- ❖ A survey of businesses conducted by the Building Owners and Management Association (BOMA) International found that the elimination of smoking from a building reduced cleaning expenses by an average of 10%. A 1993 BOMA Fire Safety Survey found that smoking was cited as the number one cause of fires. (Garland, W.S., BOMA Supports Smoking Ban in Buildings, <http://www.boma.org/comartle/comsmoke.htm>, [n.d.].)
- ❖ The National Fire Protection Association found that in 1998 (the most recent year for which data is available) smoking materials caused 8,700 fires in non-residential structures resulting in 17 deaths, 163 injuries, and a direct property damage of \$60.5 million. (Hall, Jr., J.R., "The U.S. Smoking-Material Fire Problem," National Fire Protection Association, Fire Analysis and Research Division, April 2001.)
- ❖ Smoking causes a great deal of discomfort in the workplace. 59.2% of nonsmoking employees report suffering discomfort, and even 15% of smoking employees report some degree of discomfort from secondhand smoke. (CDC, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, May 22, 1992.)

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